342 476 463 [464] Co-operation often takes the form of a division of labor. In building an elaborate permanent house with cement foundations, siding, plank flooring and a tile roof, greater skills than the handyman techniques of a smaller house are required. In the building of a house, men with special skills, such as a carpenter, a cement mixer, a stonecutter, or a mason participate; others bring lumber and wood from the mountains, as in Matsuda, or lay the grass on the tile roof. In some cases, all the labor may be donated; in others, the carpenter, the cement mixer, the stonecutter may be hired, with helper's work done by volunteers. In simpler construction, the carpentry may be done by anyone who has this secondary skill but is primarily a farmer or a fisherman. People who have those skills are said to have half and half occupations (hannohangyō in Japanese).

7

Housebuilding Ceremonies

342 In building, a distinction is made between a temporary and a permanent house. A temporary house may be built following a typhoon or a fire, or it may be constructed for a poor man and in fact be a permanent house for the family, the good house to come being more an aspiration than an early reality. The marks of a permanent house are construction with beams, instead of poles, good siding, a good roof, now mostly of tile, a design based on mat size, and a cemented kitchen. Housebuilding ceremonies and celebrations apply only to the permanent house.

[84] 342 ●782 [262] [203] [415] [825] Ceremonies or observances during stages in the building of a house differ from place to place and among people in the same village. In Matsuda before the house is started, the owner, his friends, and neighbors gather and offer a prayer that the house be a good and a happy one. Before construction, and once each year following completion, rice cakes (mochi in Japanese) and sake are placed in each of the four corners of the house site. Three rice cakes are put on the smallest of three saucers which fit into one another. Two of these saucer sets with the rice cakes, together with a sake bottle and a small cup are placed on a tray. The east, north, west, and south corners are visited in that order. Sake is poured from the flask to a small cup. There is a short prayer. A piece of white paper, attached to a stick of dwarf bamboo (Yanbaru take) about one foot long is burned. The sake is poured over the embers. The top rice cake is placed on the corner; the other two remain on the small plate. Prayers are offered for protection against the deadly snake (habu). The rice cake is then picked up. On the next corner, the ceremony is repeated.

[183] [262] When the ridge pole is put up, the carpenter prays that there will be no injuries. Observances at the raising of the roof (muneage in Okinawan) seem to be universal in the villages. Three parcels, one of salt, one of bean paste, and one of charcoal are wrapped in a leaf--any will do--and these are tied with a string and suspended from the inner side of the crossbeam or from the ridge pole. There are no prayers at This Time.

this time. Upon completing the house, the owner gives a party for those who helped him. During the last day of work, with the party scheduled for the evening, the workmen strive feverishly to complete the house on time. This is a party to celebrate a task completed. Sake flows freely. Occasionally on the last day, a man walks around the house talking to himself and throws salt toward the inside of the house. His words are not formalised and not known to his hearers. After finishing throwing the salt, he bangs the back of the house three times with a stick. This custom is said to be gradually disappearing, and is only occasionally practiced in Matsuda.[9]

In Hanashiro, there is a similar custom that differs in details. On the date the house is started, there is a small ceremony. A plate containing boiled rice, bean curd, a kind of fritter (tenpura in Japanese) and meat, together with a flask of sake are placed in the center of the site on which the house is to be built. Prayers are offered that the house be a good one. The ceremony of raising the roof is identical with that previously described in Matsuda. This applies only to the raising of the ridge pole, no ceremonies taking place with the erecting of the side poles. The center board, near to or nailed to the ridge pole, and from which the articles wrapped in a leaf or in sea weed are suspended, is inscribed with the word, shibiranka. Its meaning is unknown to me. One villager said it was the name of a legendary Chinese protector of houses.

In one instance from Minatogawa, instead of the salt, charcoal, and bean paste, only a bit of charcoal (tsumi in Japanese) was suspended and wrapped in seaweed (kombu in Japanese).

About 20 years ago in Hanashiro, the celebration on the day of completion was much more elaborate than now. A pig was killed, fish purchased, and a large feast was prepared to which the whole village was invited. The celebration now is confined to relatives, friends, and helpers, including the carpenter, whether hired or a volunteer.

In Minatogawa, when a good house is being built, there is the custom of going to a fortune teller (sanjinsō in Japanese) to discover the lucky day for commencing construction. This may be repeated to find the lucky day for putting up the poles and supports or putting on the roof. Here also a son about to establish a branch household and to build his own house takes a food offering to his father's house, places it on the Buddhist god shelf, gives thanks, and prays for good fortune before construction starts. When the house has been completed, similar offerings are made, either before the god shelf of the new house, if it has been installed, or again at the father's house. In this village, the usual observances are confined to the raising of the roof and to the celebration following completion of the home.

One last custom observed in all the villages is that one does not move into a new house unless the tide is coming in. Other occasions in which the tide is taken into consideration will be discussed later. The idea here seems to be that one moves at times of growing fullness and increase not at times of ebb and withdrawal.

9 I was unable to secure any explanation of the reason for this and the other practices beyond the familiar statement that "it is a custom." (shukan)

824 The most common of the Hanashiro trees are (1) the banyan or gajimaru, or yōzu. This tree is a common sight with its long roots growing around and through the stone fences. The tree with its roots bracing the stone fences is excellent typhoon protection for the village. [731] (2) The usuku (Japanese scientific name, the akou) resembles the gajimaru in appearance and serves the same purpose. The fukugi (Garcinia spicata Hook) and an occasional cycad are common windbreaks. [417] These trees are almost invariably in combination with stone fences, made of blocks, or with fences made of loose stones which have settled and been bound together by small plant roots. Village typhoon protection is a simple but effective combination of stone, shrubs, and trees. There is also an occasional kuroki [534] (kurchi in Okinawan), from whose trunk the samisen, the stringed musical instrument, is made, and the palm (shuro).

There are wild plants in each of the areas but their importance has also declined. Among these is the pandanus (the adan, Japanese scientific name, the takonoki). This plant was plentiful before the war, but is now scarce except in the mountain area. It can occasionally be seen in genya land or in small clumps on an outcrop. The blades of the pandanus are long and hard, with a row of spines down both sides of the blade. It has had several uses. Formerly it was the common material for making slippers (sori), hats, cigarette cases, and handbags. [463] [887] These home industries have all but disappeared, but old people occasionally do a little. In preparing the pandanus blades for use, the thorns are removed and several strips are made. These are then boiled, dried, and smoothed out. Then they are woven into the desired pattern. A first class pandanus blade is about 5 feet long. In the celebration of O-Bon, [182] the fruit of the pandanus may be offered as food to the ancestors.

Another plant occasionally used is the getto, known also in Okinawa as sannin or muchigasa. Its chief use is in the festival of the 8th day of the 12th lunar month. At this time, rice cakes (mochi) are wrapped up in its long and wide and flexible fibres. These wrappings, often made by children, are hung from the ceiling or from the wall. The stem of this plant was much used in the past for rope.

824 262 757 The nigana (njana in Okinawan, Ixeris dentata Nakai) is still used in this area as a food and medicine. It has an exceedingly bitter root, about 1/8 of an inch in diameter in a mature plant. The root is put in hot water, and the liquid drunk as a stomach medicine. The leaves, not so bitter as the root, have a sour, slightly bitter taste. They are often served with the white cuttlefish (shiroi-ikka).

The Obako (known in Okinawan as the hirawakusa or hirawagusa, Plantago Asiatica L, "Japanese ribwort") is used as a medicine and as a food. When vegetables are scarce, it is eaten as a green. As a medicine, the leaf is heated over a fire and the hot leaf is then pressed over a swelling.

553 The first naming of children is done at a ceremony on the day of birth, or on the following day, if the birth took place at night. It is known as umbagi. There is a small gathering of [262] relatives. Soup, rice, and a little sake may be served. Ordinary rice or rice cakes (mochigome) may be prepared and put on the [787] Buddhist god shelf. If a boy, the relatives and parents pray for his strength, if a girl for her good health. Umbagi, an Okinawan word, is also known as shichisan no iwai (Japanese). The ceremony precedes the burying of the afterbirth.

553 One important element in the naming of a child on its day of 823 birth is the state of the tide. The child is named only if the tide is coming in. It is not necessary that the tide be high. Perhaps midpoint is the best, though high tide is considered good. Practically everyone can calculate the time when the tide is coming in or out; since they all know the lunar calendar with a cycle completed in 15 days, it is a simple calculation.[6] The explanation always given for calculating the tide on this and other occasions is that when the tide is coming in, fortune and happiness will enter in the new life or the new situation. When the tide is ebbing, everything goes out and away.

852 The real celebration of the birth of a child occurs several days after birth. It usually occurs on the 5th or 6th day counting the birth day. This is known as mansan (Okinawan) and is in honor of the good health of the mother and the child. In Japanese, it is also called muikajari.[7] In all communities studied, the week long all night celebration has disappeared, though the celebration of mansan might last well into the night.

One celebration, observed in Hinatogawa, is probably typical of the thousands that take place every year in rural Okinawa. The guests came early in the evening to the parents' home, or, as in this case, to the home of the child's grandfather, since the father, a first son, lived in his parents' home. The men sat in the first room (ichibansa), [562] the women in the second (nibansa), following custom in parties in which both sexes are present. The head of the house, the grandfather, sat in front of the alcove (tokonoma) of the first room. The child's father [576] sat next to him. Each guest went on his knees, bowed, congratulated the father and presented him with a small money gift. The usual gift [931] is about Y20. This was accepted by the father, who then responded with a short speech. Sometimes these are formal and stiff, sometimes like a simple conversation. The guests also congratulated the

6 The method of computing times of high and low tide will be given later. The tide is important in the marriage ceremony, when moving into a new house, or when moving, in the case of a second or succeeding son, from a main house to establish a branch family, and at a child's party on the first anniversary of its birth.

7 The day was variously given me as 5th, 6th, and 7th day after birth. Muika in muikajari means 6th day.

1: Glacken E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 AC7 Okinawa AC7

who are less shy, can meet and enjoy one another's company under socially approved conditions. 834

The engagement (uino in Japanese, sakimui in Okinawan) varies with individuals and villages. In this respect it is like the marriage ceremony. A one year engagement period is considered long. In one instance of a formal engagement taken from Hanashiro, the young man goes to the girl's house, taking a small amount of sake with him. The parents of both principals are present. The group makes a short prayer, before the Buddhist god shelf, that the two will be a happy couple. The sake is placed on the god shelf. In Hinatogawa, the prospective groom's parents prepare a small feast, and they and the boy go to the bride's house. The food offering is put on the god shelf. The two young people promise to marry. In another variant, from Hatsuda, the boy takes a food offering and sake to the girl's house. The two eat together and promise to marry at a drink exchange (kawpai) in which they alternately sip, as is the custom in Okinawa, out of the same cup. From Hatsuda there was still another variant in which the boy was not involved. His mother met the girl's mother and her female relatives in the girl's house. Sake was given to the relatives of the girl. The girl's mother agreed to give her daughter up, the boy's mother agreed that the prospective daughter-in-law would be received in his family. 584 184 [078] 080

All these variants have this in common, that the engagement symbolizes an act that is more than the decision of two young people. It involves the families as well.

764 The beginning of a funeral procession is announced by a gong in the yard of a village office. The head man and other leaders and elders of the village attend the funeral. The mayor of the township or his representative joins in the procession.

[793] A Buddhist priest (bōsu-san) did not officiate at this funeral. Priests are scarce in rural Okinawa. Most of them were Japanese who returned to Japan after the war. Families can also save by dispensing with the Buddhist service. The participation of Buddhist priests, already nominal before the war, has now in the villages studied, virtually disappeared.

764 43 It is customary at a death to give a ten or twenty yen offering to the family. The money is put in a small envelop with an expression of sympathy written on it. (In Okinawa money is the usual gift at marriage, birthday celebrations, and at death. The gift may be put in a small envelop but it is common also to give a loose bill).

765 [782] Early on the morning following the funeral, the tomb is visited by members of the family. Food offerings of rice, tea, sake, and a flower may be placed in front of the tomb. A charcoal stick is burned. These visits with the offerings and prayers on the following morning are associated with a belief, still held by the old, that the dead person might still be alive and that the pounding of an adult on the wall or the crying of a child might be heard so that the living could be rescued from the tomb. The belief that the person might still be alive and possibly could be heard seems to persist in Hanashiro and Hinatogawa. It was not encountered in Matsuda, although it might well exist. [761]

2

Burial Places and the Family System

764 Okinawan tombs have excited the interest of foreigners from the earliest days of European contact. There are no cemeteries in the usual sense of the word, but areas scattered throughout the countryside, usually on the tops of hills, or on the stony sides of mountains, are given over to burial grounds. Tombs are not located on land suitable [311] for agriculture. It has been said that the Japanese forbad using agricultural land for tombs, but the practice in Okinawa seems to antedate these Japanese interferences in the culture of the rural areas. In the interior, the tombs are always on wild (genya) land. But one can also see tombs along the seashore and on offshore rocks. The outstanding [565] exceptions to this are the royal tomb area in Shuri, now largely destroyed, and the large and dramatically placed tombs in the center of Itoman town. In the case of Itoman, it is quite probable that the growing town has surrounded the areas taken as tomb sites.

Of the several types of tombs, the turtleback (kamekokata) is the most famous. It has been variously described by European travellers as

527 577 better behavior. In one instance from Matsuda, the members of the family talk over their good and bad acts and resolve henceforth to do good.

527 [823] In all the villages, the custom of new or young water (wakamizu) has survived. In Hinatogawa, at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning of the New Year, young children take fresh water in a tea pot to the homes of relatives. The new water is poured into a cup, placed on the Buddhist god shelf, or on the shelf of the fire god in the kitchen. The children are given ¥5 or ¥10 by the relatives, who are then supposed to stay young themselves. In Matsuda, new water is taken from a well early in the morning, and some is put on the god shelf. The first tea of the New Year is made with "young water".

A parent may also give a piece of pork with salt on it to his child announcing that he is now one year older. This custom is still observed, even though ages officially are now reckoned in the western manner.

In all the villages, the morning observances are family affairs; the public nature of the holiday is evident later. Tea and sake are [769] placed in front of the ancestral tablets on the god shelf. A fresh [782] kimono is put on and the offering is made before breakfast. Then the father takes the sake from the god shelf, offering sips first to his wife and then to the children.

[778] Later there are visits to the place of the patron deity or first ancestor of the village (ujigami). In Hanashiro, all of the people make this visit. In Hinatogawa, it is also a village affair, but is more involved because there are more places to go: a local religious site of unknown origin, the palace of the gods of the sea (ryūgū), the supposed place of the mountain god, the three wells with their god places, and finally to the places of the two patron deities. In Matsuda, the village head man, accompanied by surviving minor [793] priestesses (formerly in the noro order) make visits to the place of the patron deity. But whether all the villagers or only their representatives take part, the visits have the same meaning: to offer thanks to the founders of the village.

The New Year is a time for extended family reunions. If the home site of the extended family is not in the village, the family or a representative may go to the reunion in another village, if it is not too far away. Only members of the extended family attend these celebrations.

With early morning observances in the home, the public ceremonies, and the extended family reunions over, the gay, informal and public [594] part of the holiday begins. Hospitality is offered on all sides, and there is much drinking among the men. The celebration continues for the rest of the first day and through the second. The third day is a transitional day whose theme is the need of returning to work. This is hachiharu (to begin farming). The day is given over to more feasting and drinking and to some actual or token work.

3

Celebrations Through the Festival of the Fifth Month

796 The 15th day of the second lunar month (March 22, 1951) is the Buddhist holiday, higan, celebrating the spring equinox. Here it is a home festival of thanksgiving. Barley (ōmugi) or barley cakes [262] with brown sugar are offered with prayers for continued good fortune. Other grains, such as rice, millet (awa) may be offered, though the cakes (mugimochi) are of barley. In Hatsuda, this is not a home ceremony. An offering of white rice cakes is made by the village [193] head man, with the assistance of lower orders of the former priestess system, at the site of the village patron deity.

527 The third day of the third month is the festival of the dolls, [524] (hinamatsuri). It is not important in Okinawa and is spottily ob- [562] served. In Hinatogawa, it is a woman's holiday. Women and children make dolls. Gifts of dainties and candies in red lacquer boxes are prepared. People from nearby villages come to Hinatogawa, bring their lunches, and gather shells and catch fish.

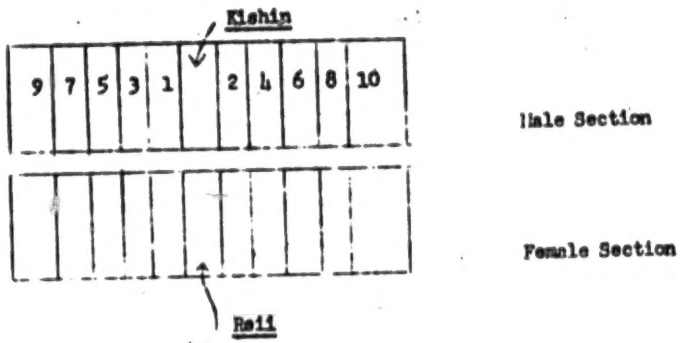
The fifth day of the fifth month is Boy's Day. This Japanese holiday is not significant in the villages. There may be banners with a picture of a carp (koi no bori) displayed, visits to the place of the patron deity, some visiting and samisen playing, and perhaps a play.

527 The 14th day of the 5th month (June 18, 1951) is the festival 526 of the Gods of the Sea and is observed only in Hinatogawa. It is this village's greatest celebration. The boat race, held on this day, attracts many from the interior villages. In Hanashiro, most activity ceases while everyone goes to the boat races. Before the [178] races, the villagers go to the religious sites to make small offerings [182] and to pray. The races are held in the estuary of the river. In their excitement, children with infants on their back often wade out in the water to cheer their favorite boat.

796 The Festival of the Fifth Month (Gogatsumatsuri) is held on the 15th day of the 5th lunar month (June 19, 1951). Like the festival of the [193] spring equinox, it is a day of thanksgiving. Thanks are given for rice instead of for barley. In Hatsuda, the ceremony is conducted by the village head man and former members of the priestess system.[2]

[119] [825] 2 According to a Hatsuda informant, women should not sew on this day. It is a rest day. If work is done, including gathering plants for fertiliser, the dreaded poisonous snake, the habu, will come. These customs were not encountered in the other villages.

778 of wood lacquered red and lettered in gold. The frame has an upper
779 section for the male dead and a lower for the female. The date of death is written on the back of each tablet. In the center of each section is a strip with a Chinese character written on it. The upper or male section has the character, Kishin, with a meaning similar to returning to the source (moto ni kaeru). The lower or female section has the character reii, suggesting that your spirit is in this place. The tablets are placed in an order, the first to the left of the middle character, the second to the right, so that the last placed ones are toward the outer edge.



(Arrangement of the Memorial Tablets (ihai)

778 The frequent occasions throughout the year when devotions are made
782 at the altar have already been described in many of the preceding pages. These can be summarized by saying that offerings and prayers are made (1) to commemorate important dates in an individual's life, like birth, the first birthday, engagement, marriage, death, and the anniversary of a death, (2) during holidays and festivals in which honoring the dead and thanksgiving are dominant themes, and (3) at times of individual and private religious worship or prayer. Some women pray daily after placing a cup of tea, a bowl of rice and a burning charcoal stick on the altar. Others observe the 1st and the 15th of the lunar month.

791 This household Buddhism, centering around the altar, has no institutional basis. There are no Buddhist temples in any of the villages. Family worship at the altar is both an honoring of the ancestral dead and also, it would seem, an acceptance of the merciful and humane doctrines of the Buddhist faith. Buddhism traditionally is the religion of consolation at death. The fact that ancestor worship takes place at the [182] Buddhist altar, however, does not mean that this is a religion in a doctrinal sense. One has been grafted on to the other.

778 796 536 825 One person in front fills in the head and forelegs, another in back provides the rear and hindlegs. The lion, with its human mechanism, is a common sight at festivals and parades. It is a symbol of health and strength worthy of imitation). In the Festival of the Full Moon, during the autumnal equinox, the lion appears again and the whole village participates in prayers before the festivities begin.

778 796 764 [825] On the 1st and 15th of each lunar month, the headman goes to the place of the guardian god and makes an offering of tea, burns a charcoal stick, and says a prayer. On the 9th day of the 9th lunar month, the village council and the elders assemble before the village burial palanquin (gan), offer prayer at the founder's site and then before the village office where the lion is standing.

Minatogawa. This village has three deity places and various explanations are given for this. Some believe that two of them represent 778 796 sites of co-founders, a first son, and his younger brother, the second son. The third site is vaguely known as a village god place. It is a small outdoor place of worship on the main village road, with a step and a shelf for charcoal sticks. The founders' sites are located in the center of the settled area, but on different sides of the road. In the site of the second son, there are three stones, shaped like life savers but with a bottom for placing the charcoal sticks, three glasses for tea, and three bottles. The site of the supposed first son, less well kept, has a small altar, four stones, tea cups, and cans for the burning of incense.

778 796 [782] [358] On New Year and at O-Bon, the whole, or substantial portions, of the village pray first at the supposed first son's site, then at the second son's. Prayers are offered also at the roadside deity place. Some of the younger villagers hope that as the older residents die off, the expenses of providing offerings and upkeep for all three can be eliminated and that simpler observances can take place at the roadside shrine. The situation now is complicated by the fact that many people regard themselves as descendants of one or the other co-founder.

778 189 [093] Matsuda. In this village, the founder's site is reached by stairs leading up a hillside. It is in the settled area near a dense growth of trees and shrubs. Close by there is a shed in which the lion skin is kept. In this village the founder's site seemed less important than another religious place, on the main road, in which women of lesser rank in the former priestess system participate in ceremonies. In this village there seems to be less participation by all the people of the village at the place of the guardian or founder deity, and, instead, representatives, like the headman, elders, and the former priestesses [096] conduct the ceremonies at New Year, O-Bon, and at the equinoctial holidays.

The group sat in a circle. The priestess occupied the highest spot, her female assistants somewhat lower places, and the men, for once, in the lowest position. The priestess, her women and the male entourage held public worship on the 15th day of the 5th, the 15th and 16th day of the 6th, and the 10th day of the 8th lunar months. On these days there were prayers for good crops, for freedom from disasters and typhoon damage. On the 10th day of the 8th month, there were special prayers that neither diseases nor epidemics enter Hatsuda. These three periods may be rest days on which the villagers may assemble at the place where the prayers are being offered. Because there is no priestess, these ceremonies are now conducted by former assistants. The meetings are attended by fewer and fewer people and the ceremonies may disappear altogether.

6

Gods of the Fire, Wells, and Sacred Groves

There are also other forms of worship which still survive. These are (1) the god of fire (hi no kami), (2) spirits of the sea, of wells, springs, and groves, and (3) types of fortune telling which blend into religious belief.

Gods of the Fire. In every Okinawan kitchen, there is a place above the stove or hearth dedicated to the kitchen or the fire god. There is no image or personification of the god. Usually the place is a very small shelf on which charcoal sticks are burned for the god of the hearth. This is done by women exclusively. The women may light the sticks daily, but it is more usual for the housewife to perform the observance on the 1st and 15th of the lunar month. This was true of all the villages, and I have never seen a kitchen which lacked a place for the fire god.[7]

Gods of the Well (ido no kami). In Hanashiro, prayers are offered in front of the two public wells on lunar New Year. The whole village does not participate. Two or three older men from each extended family perform the rite. The gods of the well are told that the villagers need water; they are thanked for what they have had, and asked to continue to furnish a plentiful supply.

7 The Shinto god shelf (kamidana) is extremely rare. In my observation, it was present only in the homes of Okinawans who had lived in Japan. One in Hatsuda, located in the first room, had two shelves, on both of which a small urn for burning incense sticks was placed between two flower vases. The place on the left represents the founder, the one on the right, his immediate descendant. The family prays to the Shinto god on the 1st and 15th of the lunar month. The husband and wife pray first, followed by the children. A rice offering is placed on the shelf. On it there was a small figurine of the fox god (inari-san) and a mirror, both Shinto symbols.

798 796 Similar worship may take place at a spring (isumi). Near Oushichan village there is a large spring. Stone stairs have been built up, amphitheatre-like, around it. Prayers are offered by villagers, or substantial numbers of them, on New Year and on the 5th day of the 5th lunar month. In daily life, the spring is a favorite place for laundering and bathing.

796 798 796 There are three well gods in Hinatogawa, and they are worshipped at the three public wells scattered throughout the village. The people of the village, or large numbers of them, assemble at these wells for prayer at various times of the year, the most important being on New Year and on boat racing day. Sake and a box of candy are placed before the well as offerings of thanks for water.

This village has also a place for the worship of the sea god. This is a simple stone on a small shelf, on a barren spot of the seashore, scarcely distinguishable from the rocks scattered in natural disarray by the waves. In a high wind, the remains of the offerings and the charcoal sticks are swept out to sea. The most important observance here occurs on the 4th day of the 5th month, the day of the sea festival and the boat races. Fishermen come to the place by boat and make offerings of sharks' fins. On this day, the whole village assembles twice to pray at the spot, once before, and once after the races and the celebration. Individual or family worship is common on New Year and at O-Bon. On the equinoctial holiday of the full moon, the headman, the heads of the neighborhood groups, the council and retired elder men assemble, offer thanks and pray for continued plenty from the sea. Very close to the palace of the sea god, a short round stick of bamboo or of thick miscanthus may be stuck in a pile of rocks. Near the top, a dried fish (usually the ika) tail is placed in a slit. In the center there is a slit for another but larger part of the dried fish.

796 798 178 The palace of the mountain god, though its identity is uncertain, is near the palace of the sea god. It is under an overhanging rock along the seashore. This seems an unusual place for the home of a mountain god, but seafarers may have prayed to the god in thanks for guiding them safely in. It seems now to have fallen into disuse. It is now partially overgrown with pandanus and little is known of the place.

796 798 782 Matsuda. In Matsuda, there are beliefs in well, mountain top, and tree grove spirits. There are 8 wells here and family groups usually divide up and worship at one of the wells. After drinking some of the water, thanks are offered to the well god.

796 128 The gods of the mountain top and the tree groves are difficult to understand. Little seems to be known about them locally, and it is difficult to disengage historical from religious elements.

[796] 782 798 One popular explanation is that these gods were the intentional invention of Saion, the 18th century statesman and authority on forestry and agriculture. But this seems highly unlikely. It is more likely that Saion capitalised on the ancient interdict against cutting down

789 824 rope was hung across the entrance of the family compound two times a year, on the 9th day of the 8th month, and on the 8th day of the 12th month. Along the rope, there were knotted blades of grass, also the san plant. The purpose is to frighten away evil spirits and evil doers. 283 One peculiarity of this twisted rice rope is that it is made in a different manner from the ordinary rope. The usual rope is a twist made by rolling the fibre between the palms to the right or away from the body. In this special rope, the roll is reversed and is to the left or toward the body. It is difficult for a person already skilled in the regular method. [193] This villager told of going to two noro priestesses in the village of Yabu who specialized in teaching this method of making ropes. The husband and the wife received instruction, paying about ¥40 for it because the wife believed in the efficacy of the practice. Each year at the proper times, the husband now makes the special rope himself.

787 791 184 Some fortune telling practices shade into religious beliefs, just as religious customs have also included soothsaying and divination. The noros and the Buddhist priests formerly practiced some fortune telling. There were no fortune tellers in any of the villages studied, but villagers occasionally consult them. Here, too, the patronage comes largely from the old and from the women. Younger people, if they know about them, regard these practices as superstitions unworthy of belief. The word meishin (superstition) is frequently heard among the young in describing customs and beliefs of the old. 791 [212] The sign of the fortune teller (sanjinsō) is the Chinese character for three written three times. These characters are said to signify the three states of existence, pre-natal, the present, and the afterlife, on all of which the fortune teller is well versed. Those in Hanashiro and Hinatogawa who wish to consult a fortune teller go to Itoman; those in Matsuda go to Nago. The cost is usually from ¥40-50 a visit. Typical reasons for a consultation with a fortune teller are: (1) to find out if an ill person will become well, (2) among the fishermen, to find out if the fishermen will return when an unexpected storm has arisen, (3) to discover if a present unhappiness has been caused by the evil deed of an ancestor and if this can be corrected, and (4) to find out the lucky days for such undertakings as marriages, building a house, or beginning new phases of construction.

● 782 774 Old women may utter a prayer on seeing a child fall, fearing that the child's spirit might escape because of surprise or fright. (This was observed in Hinatogawa).

778 In Matsuda, there were shelves for burning charcoal sticks in some of the numerous caves in the area. The nature of the worship could not be ascertained, but they may be offerings to deities of the cave.

5 [776] 782 178 Worship and prayers in the toilet seem to have completely disappeared. There were no personified toilet gods. The toilet apparently was the place in which thanks were given that a place for excrement had been provided. In all the villages, it was said to be an old belief which has now died out. There was no shelf or special place of worship in the toilet.

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is one of the rare, desired body attributes. It was the opinion of some that the descendants of the noble families who came from Shuri, however, are taller and slender, with a prominent, curved nasal ridge.

Until they feel confident in the presence of strangers, Taira people appear quiet and restrained. It is considered a virtue not to show one's emotions, and Tairans consider the expressiveness of Americans childish. Actually they are gay, talkative, and given to laughter, especially the women. Men are quiet unless stimulated by alcohol, but both men and women may lose their composure in emergencies. A notable exception is their placid reactions to the threat of disaster from the ever recurrent violent storms.

THE COMMUNITY, ITS HISTORY AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Taira is one of the northern villages on the northeast coast of Okinawa in Higashi township (see map 1). Today it is home to over 700 people who make their living—as did their ancestors since early times—from the surrounding fields, forests, and from the sea. The Okinawan name for the village, Taira, means "sloping fields." The character used for writing the prevalent Japanese version, Taira, means "flat, plain, good."

Since the family records were lost during World War II, it is necessary to depend on oral traditions for reconstruction of the history of Taira. Unfortunately, the desire of many Okinawans to establish a relationship between their local families and the former royal courts casts some doubt on the accuracy of these traditions.

According to these traditions, the first village to be settled in the vicinity of Taira was the neighboring community Kawata. After the Hokuzan kingdom in Nakijin (on the northwestern Motobu Peninsula) was conquered by the southern Okinawan kingdom of Chuzan in the fifthteenth century (Kerr, 1958:85), the second son of the Lord of Hokuzan is said to have escaped northward into Kunigami province. Unitokogami, the fleeing nobleman, arrived near the present site of Kawata and established himself in a cave around the year 1477. He is still revered today as founder of the village in a yearly spring ceremony when prayers are said in front of the cave. The oldest Taira families trace their descent in the male line from Nizenya, the "main house," he founded. Taira was settled around 1550 by two families tracing descent from this "main house." The descendents of these settlers are

But actually no family is entirely self-sufficient, for each needs to purchase foodstuff as well as ready-made clothes, manufactured mostly in Japan, more substantial building materials, such as better grades of wood, tiles, and cement, tobacco, alcoholic beverages, sweets, toilet articles, some medical supplies, and other luxuries. Farmers buy their tools; students their books and writing materials. Finally, cash is needed to pay taxes.

In addition to the utilization of sugar, pineapple, firewood, and building materials for cash, Tairans also raise pigs for sale to slaughter houses, and some families derive an income from raising silkworms and producing tea. Fishermen sell fish inside and outside the village, and a small group of people are salaried workers or have an income from specialized services.

Village leaders fear dependence on rapidly dwindling forest resources, still the main source of ready cash. They realize that the present modest living conditions of all families could be much improved if Tairans concentrated on increasing the cultivation of subsistence crops and farmed more intensively to raise cash crops. Most people lack this insight, however, and live on a day-to-day basis without much thought of the future. This is an island-wide problem which has the attention of central government agencies, and a great deal of educational propaganda comes to the village through government channels.

AGRICULTURE

The productivity of the land varies not only with its quality but also with the industriousness of the owners. Farmers who show foresight, those who seem to be under less pressure for immediate cash, take off more time from forest work to cultivate fields during planting season. The village headman and council members remind everybody during village meetings and informal discussions that work in the fields should not be neglected. With the approval of the whole community, the first and 15th of each lunar month have been set aside for farming. On these two days it is forbidden to go to the forests to cut wood. Such agreements are usually observed (as a rule), and they help to achieve their purpose but are not completely effective.

Rice is planted and harvested twice a year. The first rice is prepared in January when seeds are put into special beds where they are left to grow into young shoots until March. Until about 30 years ago it was said that all people seeded rice on the same day while prayers were

243 offered at the village shrine by the priestess. Today key agricultural
[782] events are still marked by small ceremonies in which the priestess be-
[793] seeches or thanks the gods, but the actual day for planting is determined by weather and the condition of seed.

When the rice is transplanted in March, the whole family spends long hours in the paddy. Then the paddies swarm with people; some prepare the soil by spreading fertilizer, others stand in the ooze to set
[476] the seedlings. Transplanting is done by mutual assistance groups, which will be discussed later in this chapter. They guarantee everyone a sufficient number of helping hands during the painstaking, rapid work, which has to be finished within a limited time. In a few days the whole paddy area suddenly turns from brown into the tender green of the young shoots. Once planted, intermittent weeding is all the care that is needed.

[261] In July the rice turns brown and is ready for harvest. This is an
[857] event of joy for the whole village, for young rice is most delicious and loved by everyone. By then vacations have started, so that schoolchildren can help to cut rice and carry bundles to the spot where it is threshed in treadle-type machines, located either near the field or behind one's house. As soon as the rice is threshed, the grain is carried to a place in the village where the wind blows freely. There a woman holds a flat winnowing basket filled with grain at an angle to let the
[782] breeze separate the chaff from the grain. The first rice is cut by men
[264] and offered at the family shrine before the whole family eats a specially
[251] prepared gruel. Rice is usually stored in one or two oil drums in the kitchen-side corner of the front room. Better houses have a metal-lined
[256] storeroom. Once a week a supply is taken to the miller to be hulled and polished.

Those whose fields are sufficiently wet plant a second crop, and the cycle is repeated once more in midsummer, with the second harvest falling in late December.

244 Sweet potatoes can be planted throughout the greater part of the
[262] year if the soil is not too dry. They take from five to seven months to
[231] grow to full size. Although less popular than rice, no part of the plant is wasted. The large tubers are consumed, the small ones are usually fed to the pigs; the young leaves are used as vegetables, the older ones cooked into pig food. Slips are cut and used for planting a new crop.

The preferred variety of potato (*tadushi imu*) is grown in the dry paddies during the second rice season. To plant this potato, the soil must be piled up to form a long, narrow, flat-topped mound. One of the hardest jobs for farmers, this is done by men in the humid heat of a midsummer day. Women set the slips after the earth has been moved.
[251] These potatoes are the only variety which are thought to improve with

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director with assistants and clerks. The clerks are always young people just out of school who receive nominal wages in return for a seven-day work week. The township office employs as janitor a girl who keeps the office in order, serves tea at any time during the day, washes dishes, and helps to cook meals for entertaining. Her family owns one of the largest houses in the central village and more land than most others. No social stigma is attached to her job; in fact, most Taira girls would consider it a privilege to exchange their mountain work for her kind of employment even though they would earn no more. Another girl, employed by the local "doctor" as nurse and maid, lives with the family, eats with them, and sleeps with their children. Only one farmer employs a hired hand, a man from another township.

Among others living on a salary is the postmaster. His father held the same office, and his son is now trained to succeed him as the third in line. The rice miller, a man from outside the village and married to a Taira woman, and the "doctor" also depend for most of their incomes on specialized services. The latter owns his dispensary and small hospital. He receives some financial support from the township government. His services to people are compensated for either in cash or kind. Patients who are unable to pay at once will bring rice to his house after the harvest. These remunerations, pig raising, and other side activities make him, along with the rice miller and the postmaster, the wealthiest person in Taira. Local male school teachers also own fields, to which they give time in the afternoons and Sundays to help their wives.

The priestess and her assistants, although they are religious specialists, are not paid in money for their services. They participate in daily work like the rest of the village. Only when performing services outside the community is the priestess paid a small fee. Within the village she receives the food and sake which are offered in the ceremony, whether she is called by a family or prays at the village shrine on a general holiday.

DIVISION OF LABOR BY SEX AND AGE

Men and women are equal partners in everyday economic activities, both in agricultural and forest work. Only a few occupations are clearly differentiated by sex: fishing, the handling of horses, and the carrying of night soil are done exclusively by males; housework and the care and feeding of pigs predominantly by women. Some agricultural work is considered too heavy for women, for example, the turning of the

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Both adult men and women also belong to mutual assistance groups, mutual loan associations, and to the work groups described in Chapter 3. All individuals between 16 and 57 are expected to cooperate in community work projects. All households are members of the village cooperative. Since most villagers look to the cooperative for help in improving their economic conditions, this draws them together in a familial way.

It will be noted that age and marital status are prerequisites for membership in most of these associations and that only one is exclusively for women and one exclusively for men.

Taira culture is essentially egalitarian. Personal status is not ascribed by membership in social classes or achieved by the accumulation of wealth. Furthermore, although power and respect are the attributes of certain village offices, such as headman and school teacher, these only give rank *ex officio*. An ex-headman has no higher status than one who has never held such an office.

There are factors, however, which do differentiate Tairans as to personal status. Men have somewhat more power and command more respect than women; adults must be addressed respectfully by children; older siblings have more authority and privileges than younger; and in recent years the educated are somewhat more respected and are more likely to be chosen to hold office than those with the minimum required amount of schooling. And since education often leads to better jobs, greater wealth is sometimes associated with status, though not a necessary prerequisite.

The status of women in Okinawa, although, ideally, inferior to that of men, is in reality relatively high. Many cultural forms are based on the principal of male superiority, which Japanese values tend to reinforce, but there are numerous indications in daily life that women command a comparatively high degree of respect and power. It is difficult to assess to what degree status differences have been influenced by contact with Japanese; the importance of women in religious affairs suggest their higher status prior to the introduction of the Japanese school system in Taira.

As will be discussed in the chapter on religion, although the veneration of one's father's ancestors is the core of one part of Okinawan religion, the ceremonies are run by the women. The oldest male of each main house and the household head in each household are nominally responsible for keeping the tablets of the ancestors on his house shrine, but the actual upkeep of this ancestral shelf and the bimonthly offerings are performed by the women. If no direct male descendant is available to keep the ancestral tablets, a widowed woman retains them

on her house until a male can assume the responsibility for them. The propitiation of the natural deities is lead by the village priestess—and she is assisted by a group of women.

Taira women are essential to the financial well-being of the family. Their role in both agriculture and lumbering is equal to that of the men. Since there are few kinds of work which women cannot do and do not engage in, a widow or single woman, although handicapped, can support herself and her family. Several women, whose husbands died during World War II or who have been divorced, support themselves and their children. One Taira woman supported her four children while her husband left for Japan to help a sick brother. She worked the household fields and sold fish. Her husband, who was expected to return after three weeks, remained away for six months. Once or twice he wrote his family to ask for money; his wife and sister obliged. Even old women remain active members of the family. They contribute to the household economy by working in the potato fields, cutting firewood, and doing other useful work around the house.

Such economic independence gives women a place in the family which cannot easily be challenged by a male who theoretically can claim preferential treatment. Perhaps a man is more dependent on his wife than she is on him. Men never cook. They expect the womenfolk to look after house affairs. A wife, although she does not usually own the land on which she works, has the same rights as her husband to the village forest lands. There she cuts firewood like the men, cooperating with the husband in preparing it for sale. Most of all, pig raising is her concern, and this gives her an important hold on the purse strings.

There is no uniform rule as to who keeps the money in the family. In some households the husband takes care of all financial matters and hands over small sums of money to the wife for daily use. In these families it is either found that the wife does not contribute heavily to subsistence or that she is from another village and is somewhat intimidated by her husband and unable to find security in having relatives close by. Such women are meek or at least restrained and solicitous of their husbands.

There are numerous cases, however, in which women handle all money affairs. In one such home the husband is a township official. His wife, although from a distant village, is a forceful character and follows economic pursuits independent of her husband. He is glad to let his wife handle finances, although he retains ultimate control over them. The more common situation, however, is almost equal responsibility in economic matters between the sexes. Where this is the case,

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Chapter 8

Religion

771 The religious beliefs of people in Taira and their ritual practices rec-
177 ognize the existence of two different sources of supernatural forces.
[776] The old Okinawan religion, which is still practiced by many persons
in the village, centers on beliefs in a host of nonhuman spirits that
[769] inhabit certain localities. A historically more recent Confuscian-
Bhuddist influence from China and Japan has added to these beliefs
the veneration of ancestors who, in their divine state after death, con-
trol many activities of the living. Under the influence of these two
[782] forces, the animistic and the ancestral, life must be conducted in such
[784] a way that both remain appeased at all times by proper worship and
performance of ritual as well as by avoidance of actions which might
offend these supernatural forces.

771 Even though many younger people laugh away the adherence to
[154] beliefs, especially in animistic deities, there is much evidence that the
life of almost all people is controlled by fears, anxieties, and desires
for appeasement stemming from these religious beliefs. Although his-
torically the animistic and ancestral religious beliefs were separate,
they are synchronized at present so that it is not always possible to
make a clear distinction between each system (Lebra: 1958).

776 The supernatural beings of nature live all around the village. There
are mountain deities, deities of the sea, of the well, of trees, and other
places. Any localities connected with productive activities, such as the
store, the sugar mill, the sugar press, and the village truck, have their
[372] own deities. There is also the Deity of Fire, associated with the hearth
and the house. He is represented in three hearth stones found in most
simple kitchens. Three upright small stones, resembling the hearth
stones, are the divine symbols in the village shrine where all these
supernatural beings are worshipped.

[782] The supernatural beings living in and around the village appear

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like "owners" of the concrete objects which they inhabit. These objects can be made subservient to human needs if care is taken not to offend the deities. As long as proper ritual observances are performed, humans need not fear their hostility. They are addressed in prayers and chants, and people make offerings to them at several ceremonies during the year. No one in Taira, including the priestess, has any exact knowledge about their characteristics, and there is no theological dogma, but people know that when building a house, for example, one must announce his intention to the deities and pacify these spirits who have been carried with the lumber from the mountains or with gravel from the beach and the sea. They must be thanked for letting the builder use such materials and sent back to their natural abode. Before the house is finished, the surrounding plot of land must be cleared of all evil spirits. Neglect of such ceremonies can turn supernatural beings into adversaries. One family who neglected proper rituals on their house lot when they built their home tried to appease angry deities by holding a ceremony a year after the house was finished because bad luck had befallen members of the household. Although most supernatural beings can be pacified by proper observance of rituals, there are some who are inherently malevolent. These ogres may be seen in the form of fire balls or in some other shape or physical appearance.

The worship of these nature deities and the observance of ceremonies in their behalf are in the hands of the high priestess and her female assistants. In former times each main house, later each village, had its own priestess. The present high priestess in Taira derives her office from a much later institution, a nation-wide hierarchy of religious officials established by the Okinawan king in an effort to combine religion with political influence and supervision in the villages. Today the high priestess has no association with the central government; the Japanese abolished the system. The hierarchy of female religious officials (see Lebra: 1958), those representing main houses, and the chief village priestess is no longer clearly delineated in Taira, since representatives of several offices have left the island or died, and the vacancies have not been filled. The high priestess has taken over most of the religious functions. Her chief assistants are older women from the two main houses. While these three women officiate, several other women are in attendance as helpers. In spite of the diminishing role of animistic religion in the daily life of younger people, the high priestess still enjoys prestige in the community. She is exempted from communal labor in recognition of her status.

The present high priestess is a woman in her fifties who works and

793 lives like other villagers, spending most of her time in the fields and around her home. She has children and grandchildren, but the father of her children no longer lives in Taira. She regards the continuation of the old ceremonies as her holy duty even though she has to do without most of the accustomed material support from the village and [358] in spite of disbelief and lack of participation. She has sought in vain [346] to have the village make necessary repairs on the simple village shrine near the township office and on the little hut where the ancestral tablets of her predecessors are kept.

793 While many of the former ceremonies have been discontinued, the 782 priestess is still called on to officiate at house-building ceremonies, to purify the lot, to offer prayers when the beams are raised, and to con- [342] duct the dedication when the house is finished. If the owner is mov- [776] ing out of an old house, the priestess notifies the fire deity so that he [778] will follow to the new abode. On other occasions the priestess conducts prayers at the village shrine or at one of the other sacred places near the village. Many of the prayers are succorant—requesting the aid and blessing of the gods in accomplishing a certain goal. In general, as Lebra has pointed out (1958), ceremonies of asking for help are more numerous and elaborate than thanksgiving ones.

[312] On New Year's morning the priestess prays at the water well. Since [178] so many ceremonies have been abbreviated and are no longer carried out in traditional detail, the priestess apologizes for short cuts in her prayers. If she fails to offer prayers in all prescribed spots, she pacifies [794] the deities by facing in the direction of the sacred place where the [787] ceremony should have been conducted. Although the priestess is clearly best qualified to enter into communication with the deities, many older women seem to possess such power also, and if the priestess' assistants are not present, another older woman can function as her helper.

782 For these ceremonies food for offerings is contributed by the village. 788 The priestess, in a white gown, kneels, flanked by her assistants, also [262] in white, in front of a tray of sake, rice, or other food for the deities. Charcoal incense sticks are burned while brief prayers asking the [533] deities for a successful crop, thanking them for a harvest, or whatever is appropriate to the occasion are mumbled. On certain occasions the women sing chants. After these ceremonies, the priestess, her assistants and the few others present, usually old women, share the food offerings.

796 One of the most dramatic ceremonies is held on Boat Race Day in 793 lunar June. Priestesses from several villages gather near Taira. During the ceremony the Taira priestess stands in the middle of a circle formed by the other priestesses and helpers, beating a drum as the

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women chant. The tempo becomes more and more frenzied, and at a certain moment a bell rings. Nobody knows who rings it, and no amount of questioning elicited any information other than that this was done by divine action.

Ancestral worship is equally important in the life of Taira people. Each house of an oldest son has a shelf with a shrine in the main living room. On this shelf the family keeps the ancestral tablets, each representing a deceased ancestor of a recent period. The tablets for whole family lines are kept on the shelves of the main houses. Through this system a family maintains continuity between the living and the dead. Although a deceased person is believed to become a buddha or a god who ascends to heaven, his presence is still felt by the living relatives. If they fail to make the required offerings on the first and fifteenth day of each lunar month, or otherwise neglect religious duties toward the ancestor, misfortune may come to the family. At the same time, the worship of common ancestors holds branches of the larger kin groups together.

No village adult died during our stay, but the funeral practices for adults described by Glacken (1955) and Pitts et al. (1955) for other villages in Okinawa are similar. Seven years is the age limit for a child burial, which is simple and does not require attendance of people other than immediate relatives and perhaps one or two neighbors.* During the study an 8-year-old boy died from an illness and was given a full funeral, which is similar to that of adults.

The funeral must take place at the first outgoing tide after the body has been prepared and dressed. Accompanied by family, residents of the ward, and mourners from other parts of the village whose number depends on the prominence of the dead, the body is carried on a simple, open litter to the tomb area just west of the central village (see map 2). Women feel free to show their emotions, while men remain outwardly calm. Until decomposition takes place, the body remains in a tomb used by the whole village for temporary entombment. Like other village ceremonies, funerals are less elaborate now than they once were, perhaps to the relief of all concerned, since death is highly anxiety provoking, and nobody feels comfortable during the prayers and the ritual farewell to the corpse at the tomb. The participants receive a cup of sake before leaving the tomb area to cleanse them of the pollution of death. Some people still prefer to return to the village by a different route so that the spirit of the dead person will be fooled and unable to follow.

* The reason for this is possibly that the younger child has not yet fulfilled his filial obligations.

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After death, memorial services are held in the home of the deceased every seventh day until the 49th day when a more elaborate ceremony concludes this period, and a permanent tablet is installed on the house shrine. On this day, too, offerings to the deceased change from white rice to red-colored rice, indicating the end of the mourning period. From now on, observances in memory of the dead are held on the first, third, seventh, thirteenth, twenty-fifth, and thirty-third anniversary of death. These are small family affairs at which special food is prepared and offered at the shrine before it is consumed.

The body is left in the tomb for at least three years until a propitious day when the whole village decides to wash the bones of all those who have died within the preceding three to seven years. On Bone Washing Day little groups of family members gather around the coffin. They take out the bones, clean them, wrap them in a white cloth and place them in an urn. Women do all the cleaning of bones because it is believed that they have more power to expel the evil. They weep freely, and even some men find it hard to restrain their emotions. Young children are kept away from the tomb area at this time. The urns are then placed inside the family tomb, which has been opened for this purpose. Remains other than bones are burned with the coffin.

Every lunar March ancestral services take place at the tombs, attended by many members of the kin groups to whom each tomb belongs. Some come from the city or other villages for this occasion, including women who have married into another kin group. This celebration of the dead is more serious than other religious events. Offerings of sake and special delicacies are made and then eaten by the family group. One family, sitting in picnic style around the tomb after their prayers, even began to sing and dance—probably to the delight of the ancestors who in their life must have enjoyed many a good feast and dance. Tombs of other relatives may also be visited for short prayers and other offerings.

Spirits of the dead are harmful only if the deceased is not from the village. For this reason new residents formerly could not bury their dead near the village. Even now, recent settlers in the central village have no tombs and keep their dead in urns in a cave, and the residents of outlying houses or field houses have a separate tomb area altogether. If a stranger happens to die in the village, measures are taken to prevent his spirit from doing harm. The body of a fisherman from southern Okinawa was brought to shore after a storm. There it was left for several hours on the beach under a tent in the hot sun until relatives arrived in a hired car to take the body home. Even then peo-

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ple did not carry it through the streets but along the shore to a spot nearby where the car could pull up.

Communication with ancestral or family spirits lies in the hands of individual households or the larger kin group. In general, as with the nature deities, women maintain the relationship. The oldest woman in the house prays and makes offerings in front of the divine shelf or by the tombs. Sometimes the high priestess, whose only regular role in the cult of ancestors centers around the mythical founder of the village to whom vague references are made, is asked to conduct a special prayer for a family at its ancestral shrine. Such invitations are usually the result of consultation with another religious practitioner to whom one turns in case of misfortune.*

Those who are considering a special undertaking, such as building a new house or moving to another one, or transporting ancestral tablets from one home shrine to another, seek the advice of a diviner, the *sanjinsō* or *yekisha*. This expert, always a man, consults books on the workings of the universe, special astrological calendars from which he can predict events by using a horoscope calculated on the birth date of the person seeking advice.

Although it would seem from the attendance at ceremonies that older people, mostly women, are the supporters of religion, even the most modern of the Tairans seem to share beliefs in the power of the supernatural forces and are loath to make an open break with traditions. One may verbalize that the old religion is just "superstition," but when it comes to dealing with adverse events, when somebody suggests that perhaps the *yuta* should be consulted, or a special offering is in order, or when the old special wine of the gods is prepared from rice for Boat Race Day, then many of the apparent apostates cooperate. To some extent this is done to appease the older people, but fear of neglecting duties, especially toward ancestors, is probably much stronger in general than people's behavior would suggest. Religious influence, then, which controlled so many facets of village life in former days, still acts as a strong force in uniting the members of families and descent groups as well as in binding together the community as a unit separate from other communities.

* See Chapter 9 for description of the *yuta* or shaman.

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Today the *yukajiru* ceremony held on the fourth day ends the seclusion. A group of close relatives gather to ask for the good health of the child and to make food offerings to the ancestors.

On the fourth or fifth day a name is selected for the newborn. In the old days rice oracles presided over by an old woman were consulted to ensure that the name consist of the proper combination of Japanese writing characters, an essential for the well-being of the child's personality. Today family elders and the local teacher are consulted. In the pre-Japanese periods, temporary names were used until a permanent name was given. This practice was intended to fool the spirits during the early years when the child was thought to be particularly susceptible to spirits.*

On the sixth day after birth the mother is allowed to take her first postdelivery bath; the room which she has occupied with her baby is cleaned and aired, and preparations begin for the *mansang* celebrations. For the event the mother's parents try to be present, especially if it is a first child. Friends and relatives in the village attend. A female elder of the patrilineal kin group or the priestess prays behind a tray of rice, rice wine, and incense so that the child will sleep peacefully and not cry at night. Thanksgiving prayers are offered to the ancestors and the nature deities for the health of both mother and child.

When the prayers are completed, a man sings the *mansang* song to the accompaniment of a samisen. The father of the baby then rises to dance briefly, sits down, and writes with brush and ink on a white sheet of paper the name and birth date of his child. The paper is then hung on the wall near the alcove. Meanwhile the special song is being concluded:

> Coming from the darkness to light,
> This baby was received as a treasure
> And the mother is being celebrated.

Food is then served, and the guests discuss the name and admire the newborn. Like all parties, the celebration ends with song, dance, and wine drinking.

The *mansang* celebrations mark the end of the most critical period for the infant. From now on he may be taken outdoors. At the month's end, his parents may take him to see his maternal grandparents in their village, to offer food at the ancestral shrine of the mother. This is called the first walk. Sons who have left the paternal village for the city return with their infant to observe this day.

* Hanging an irregularly left-woven rope in the delivery room to keep out evil spirits which might harm the newborn, is no longer done in Taira.

brazier in the city. She was kept warm continuously, even in hot weather, so that, it is said, women often broke out in skin eruptions from the heat. At present younger women are not following this practice and many regard it as a foolish custom. The absence of jiiru in post-war houses may be a factor in the decline of the custom. 178 846 [354]

Post-natal Observances During the first year of life the child is the center of several ceremonies. They are in brief: 852

1) Mbagii suuji, "Red rice ceremony". Held on the day of birth. Relatives, friends, and neighbors come. Rice dyed red and a soup of taro stems (a symbol of many children) are offered to the ancestral tablets and served to the guests. The afterbirth is buried behind the house while the children are made to laugh so that the baby will have a good disposition. [844]

2) Naajiki, "Naming". Held during the first week. Practices vary. In one variety the baby's grandmother releases a crab and a grasshopper and shoots an arrow at a winnowing tray; in another she divines with rice grains to see if the name she has selected is proper. This rite was formerly held to give the baby its native Okinawan name. [553] [787]

3) Mansang, "Full birth". Held on the 7th or 30th day after the birth to celebrate the full term. A feast is served to relative, friends, and neighbors.

4) Naa'njii, "First going out". Held for a boy on the first day of the ten-day cycle, designated as kanii, on the second kanii day for a girl. The baby's grandmother makes it pray to the ancestral tablets and to the oven god, then marks its forehead with soot and takes it out, formerly to pray to the god of the pigsty-privy. [769] [782]

5) Hachi-atchii, "First walking". Held whenever the mother is first able to go to visit her parents and siblings. She takes gifts of food to them and in return they give money to the baby.

6) Tanka, "Birthday". Held on the first anniversary of the birth. A feast is prepared and many relatives and friends come bringing gifts of money. The child's future career is divined by placing a number of objects in front of it---money, a book, an abacus, food, etc. If the child chooses the money he will be rich; if the book, a scholar; if the food, a glutton; and so forth. The odds are usually weighted in favor of a desirable future. [527] [787]

There seems to be some variation in all of these practices. Several may be obsolescent because some of the elements entering into them are no longer in use, the pigsty-privy and the native names, for example. [178]

Infanticide New-born babies may be done away with if they are not wanted, but this is probably not at all common under ordinary circumstances. One example was recorded: An old woman who died recently lay for about a week on her death bed unable to talk. Her children gathered about her, wondering if some sin ('tsumi') were not in need of atonement ('tsugunai'). 847 783

the ancestral tablets, since they receive offerings and worship at both places. The spirits of the ancestors present in the tablets are called ugwansu (probably literally "masters of worship"). The existence of the dead in Heaven seems rather unclearly defined. In speaking of the dead, people much more frequently use the term "yonder world" (Japanese 'ano yo'), which seems to refer to a realm co-existent with this world, different from it in form but not necessarily remote in space. It is my impression that "yonder world" refers to an unseen spiritual world around the living rather than any distant Heaven or Land of the Dead. It may be that different entities go to different places, as in Chinese eschatology, where each individual has two souls, the "hun" which goes to Heaven as a god, and the "p'o" which stays on Earth as a demon. But the data at hand do not reveal such a neat structure. Or perhaps the concept "Heaven" is merely a recent introduction from China and not yet wholly integrated with native concepts.

The distinction between spiritual beings who formerly had a human existence and spiritual beings who are wholly non-human is also not always clear. In every village there are numerous ugwanju, places of worship. These seem to be associated with the founder of the village or the aji or local official---his tomb, the wells where he got water, the hilltop where he worshipped, etc. Non-human spirits probably are believed to inhabit these places, other than the tombs, but it is my impression that most of the worship is directed toward the deceased persons, and indeed that most important local spirits are in fact deceased persons who have become deified.

On the other hand, there are spirits associated with the house and yard that are clearly non-human. The most important of these is the Fii-nu-kang, "God of the Fire", or U-kama, "Oven". (These two terms may represent two historically separate concepts, but they are now used interchangeably.) The Fire God is represented by a small vessel containing ashes that stands above or behind the oven in nearly every house. It may even be found behind the little kerosene stoves used by city rooming-house dwellers. This vessel is made and attended by the mistress of the house. When a branch house is established she makes a vessel of earth or obtains one and partly fills it with ashes from the Fire God of the main house. The offerings, among some Yamada families, consist of incense and three cups of cooked rice offered on the first and fifteenth of every lunar month, before similar offerings are made to the ancestral tablets. On the 24th day of the 12th lunar month the Fire God is said to ascend to Heaven to return again on New Year's. One old woman explained that the Fire God (Fii-nu-kang-ganashii) is "like a policeman" and Heaven (U-kami-ganashii) is "like the government"; when the Fire God goes up it reports whatever the family has done wrong during the year.

Offerings are also made on occasion to the gate, the well, the corners of the yard, the pigsty-privy, and elsewhere. The "Pigsty-privy God" (Fuuru-nu-kami) was formerly of importance especially in treating cases of loss of mabui.

cause misfortune; the ability to do this, he says, is hereditary from mother to daughter. My informants did not identify ichijama with the mabui or any other such entity, but merely explained it as a kind of 'noroi', "curse". Its effect is a sharp pain inside the body or the feeling that a fingernail has been thrust into the eye. If the person responsible is known, they said, the affliction may be cured by spitting in his direction and throwing pig dung in his direction, shouting, "I smear it on your face!" According to Yanagida, a yuta can cure an afflicted person by squeezing his thumb, which causes the thumb of the person responsible to be crushed. 754 [756]

Illness may also be caused by gods or local spirits as punishment for the breaking of tabus. For example, at Yamazato in Chinen-son it was said that on the 1st, 8th, 18th, and 28th of every month the "mountain god" (yama nu kami) makes a circuit of inspection of the mountain behind the village and therefore one cannot go to cut trees or grass on those days for fear of punishment. 753 784

But probably the most frequent interpretation of illness and misfortune is that it is caused by ugwambusuku, an insufficiency of worship (from ugwang, "worship" and fusuku, "insufficiency"). As has been explained, the dead can influence the lives of the living for good or bad. If the ancestors of a family are well cared for, that is, receive the proper offerings and worship, they may help that family to prosper and multiply, but on the other hand, if the ancestors are not cared for they will let the family know of their needs by some light illness, or, if their needs are still ignored, by some greater misfortune. They may not deliberately mean to harm their descendants; the misfortune may be automatic; this point is not clear. At any rate, the fear of ugwambusuku appears to be a very common anxiety and to play a central role in the whole structure of ancestor worship. Various religious practitioners and diviners, but particularly the yuta, are frequently called upon to try to determine where the insufficiency lies, what deceased person has not received his full share of worship and is therefore causing the current illness or other misfortune. To account for such illnesses and misfortunes the yuta and others may have revelations (shirashi) which revise the family's genealogy and even reveal the existence of hitherto unknown ancestors. 753 769 775 [152] [756] [787]

The insufficiency is not always of worship of the ancestors, although this is probably the most frequent type. Illness may also be caused by an insufficiency of worship of the Fire God. It is said that if an illegitimate child or the child of a secondary wife does not worship at least once at the Fire God of his shiji ("line") that is, the Fire God of his father's family, he may become ill. Thus it is not uncommon for the mother of an illegitimate child to bring it to the house of its father and ask to let it pray once to the Fire God there. This practice may also, of course, serve to demonstrate paternity. 753 782 [848] [851]

Also probably related to the concept that the ancestors influence the living is the practice of establishing a fictitious adoptive relationship between a child and an unrelated family. If a child is weakly its mother may ask an unrelated adult to become the yashinee-uya, "adopted parent", 769 753

direction of some tombs in order to prevent the ghosts from coming into the yard. I have also seen a woman who had some training as a nurse throw salt over a hospital patient who had just had a major operation; this was, she said, to cleanse the patient and the bed. Salt is also used as a home remedy for stomach disorders. A mother or grandmother may rub salt on the navel of a child suffering from a stomach ache. According to a small boy who received this treatment, it works. 755 767

Prayers are directed toward the supernatural beings who may help one overcome an illness. Curses and spells are directed toward malevolent beings, usually ghosts, when they are the cause of illness. Spells (mannaa, Japanese 'majinai') are verbal formulae that have a magical effect. Persons who are known to know spells and who may be asked to use them for the benefit of others are called mannaasaa ('majinai suru hito'), but spells seem to be useful only for a few diseases and so there is probably little specialization in their use. 782 755

To indicate something of the mixture of the natural and the supernatural (to use Western categories) in the treatment of illness in the Okinawan home, I have appended a description of the notions about and treatment of a few diseases as observed and as described by informants. These are all skin ailments. 756 757

1. Kamigasaa A kasa (skin eruption or rash) caused by kami (gods). 755 757

a. Irigasaa Identified as the same as the Japanese 'hashika' (dictionary translation, "measles"). This disease is caught only once, usually as a child. One must catch it before he becomes a complete person ('ichininmae'). Because children sometimes die of it, parents worry before they have caught it but are eager to have it over with. There are lighter and heavier "requests" ('o-negai') so that if a child has a "light request" the parents of other children may bring them in to lie beside the sick child and eat what food he leaves in order that they may contact the disease. But the disease is given by the god and therefore the other children get it only if they were meant to do so. 753 [64]

The disease begins with a fever and then a rash appears on the head and moves downward. If the rash does not appear the fever may rise and therefore parents worry if the rash is delayed. If there is no rash visible it may be that the rash is on the inside unable to get out and thus is causing the fever. This is dangerous.

Careful treatment is essential. The god comes around to see how the patient is being treated; if the family is not watching the child carefully, the god makes the disease worse. In a case observed, the mother kept the child in bed covered with a thick quilt and mosquito net and sat beside him, fanning him almost continuously. Polite language is also necessary in order not to offend the god.